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SUBJECT: CONCILIATORY CLIMATE AT WALDHEIM FUNERAL

REFS: A) STATE 84290 B) VIENNA 01588

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/AGS AND EUR/OHI

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#### Ceremonies

1. (U) On June 25, former President Kurt Waldheim was buried in the Vienna Central Cemetery following a State Funeral and requiem at St. Stephen's Cathedral. There were also ceremonies at the Vienna International Center (UN City) and in front of the Federal Chancellery honoring Waldheim. Waldheim died on June 14 at the age of 88 (ref B).

#### Calls for Reconciliation

2. (U) According to Waldheim's wish, no foreign heads of state were invited to the ceremonies. The entire Austrian Government, as well as Liechtenstein's Head of State, Count Hans Adam II, attended the funeral. Speeches at the requiem reflected conciliatory tones. President Heinz Fischer characterized Waldheim as a "great Austrian," but Fischer also noted that Waldheim's insistence that he "had only done his duty" during World War II had raised concerns. However, Fischer maintained that those who had accused Waldheim of war crimes had committed an injustice. Former U.S. Ambassador to Austria Helene Von Damm also spoke at the requiem, stressing that "forgiveness" was an obligation for Christians. Generally, the speakers expressed respect for Waldheim's last will and testament, in which he called for reconciliation.

#### Press Comments On U.S. Position

3. (SBU) One press report noted that the U.S. remained irreconcilable, given that no U.S. Government officials attended the funeral. Several commentaries called on the U.S. to remove Waldheim from the Watchlist, as a last gesture of reconciliation.

#### Comment

4. (SBU) The entire Austrian political leadership -- the Social Democratic Party (SPO) and the conservative People's Party (OVP) -- jointly participated in the ceremonies. Perhaps both were striving for political closure to the issue, as the SPO had exposed the "Waldheim Affair," which culminated in the U.S. Watchlist Decision, and the OVP had played to nationalist sentiments by exploiting the affair in Austria's 1986 presidential election campaign. The

Austrian political class emphasized Waldheim's accomplishments as a career diplomat focused on international dialogue and mediation. The funeral marked the end of an era, in which the Waldheim Affair triggered a domestic and international controversy. However, it also began a process whereby Austria began to more critically analyze its heretofore self-described role as a victim of National Socialism, rather than as a perpetrator.

Kilner